



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

*"Parks Make Life Better!"*

John Wicker, Acting Director

December 9, 2015

TO: Pat Modugno, Chair  
Stephanie Pincetl, Vice Chair  
Doug Smith, Commissioner  
David W. Louie, Commissioner  
Curt Pedersen, Commissioner

FROM: Kathline J. King, AICP, Chief of Planning  
Planning & Development Agency *K. King*

SUBJECT: **PROJECT NO. R2015-03286**  
**CASE NO. RADVT201500011/RENV T201500237**  
**EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON PARK MASTER PLAN**  
**DECEMBER 9, 2015 – AGENDA ITEM: 8**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) has prepared the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Master Plan (Master Plan) which amends the 1978 Willowbrook State Recreation Area General Plan. The proposed Master Plan project will expand the existing Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park (approximately 104 acres) by adding the former Ujima Village Apartment Complex site (approximately 16 acres), and potentially the Ujima Housing Corporation site (approximately 6 acres) for a total of 126 acres of land. The Master Plan consists of an unified graphic illustration of the conceptual design for all of the revitalized park consisting of the following primary components: community event center, gymnasium, equestrian center, south agency headquarters, aquatic center, multi-purpose stadium, amphitheater, skate park, water features, wedding pavilion, walking trails and exercise amenities, dog park, sculpture garden and civic plaza, restrooms, group picnic areas, children's play areas, and circulation and parking.

**BACKGROUND**

The Project site is generally bounded by 120th Street to the north, Avalon Boulevard to the west, El Segundo Boulevard to the south, and Clovis Avenue to the east. The existing Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park (Park) was created jointly in 1977 by the California State Parks and the County's Department of Parks and Recreation as the Willowbrook State Recreation Area. A Quit Claim Deed was filed by the State on December 1, 1987 transferring the land to the County. The Deed requires that public hearings be conducted by the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors prior to the adoption of the Master Plan, as stated in the excerpt below:

*"The deed is subject to the express conditions subsequent that the real property conveyed is to be used as a public park and recreation area and that park improvements conform to the Willowbrook State Recreation Area General Plan adopted pursuant to Section 5002.2 of the Public Resources Code, except that the plan may be amended in accordance with the procedures for amendment of specific plans set forth in Article 8 (commencing with Section 65450) and Article 9 (commencing with Section 65500) of Chapter 3 of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code. If, prior to adoption of amendments, duly noticed public hearings are conducted by both the County of Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission and the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors. In reviewing any amendment of that plan, the Board of Supervisors shall consider the development criteria of Section 5019.56 of the Public Resources Code."*

The proposed Master Plan will comply with 5019.56 of the Public Resources Code and Article 8, Specific Plan (Sections 65450-65457) of Chapter 3 of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code, as the Sections 65500-65507 (Article 9) mentioned in the Deed are no longer in the California Government Code.

The Park was renamed in November 1992, to the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park after a former Los Angeles Lakers professional basketball player. The project site is located on the former Athens Tank Farm. The site was a petroleum products storage and distribution facility that consisted of two large crude oil reservoirs, 22 above ground storage tanks, absorption plants, and pipelines. The former Athens Tank Farm was owned and operated by ExxonMobil Oil Corporation from the 1920's until the 1960's. The petroleum storage facilities were removed in 1963, while the absorption plant remained until 1964. All facilities were removed, and the entire property was vacant in 1965. A Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was prepared in 2012 by Kleinfelder West Inc. to address impacted soils and soil vapors on the project site. The RAP provides for implementation of a remedial technology to mitigate off-site migration of soil vapor and to begin to address soil vapor in adjacent off-site areas. These environmental cleanup efforts are currently in process. The environmental cleanup efforts are the responsibility of ExxonMobil, are not a part of the proposed project, and will be completed irrespective of the proposed project. The County does not propose to develop any amenities as part of the proposed conceptual site plan until both the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control have deemed each particular use area to have been remediated below the thresholds appropriate for public use of the site.

## **ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION**

### **Project Objectives**

The goal in the development of project is to enhance the community through revitalization of the existing facilities and implementation of new active recreational amenities, multi-purpose use facilities, community gathering areas and a safe environment. The proposed project is intended to meet the following objectives:

- Expand the existing Park by adding the former Ujima Village Apartment Complex site, and potentially the Ujima Housing Corporation property;

- Provide a balance between both passive and active recreational uses that meet the demands of the community and surrounding area;
- Provide the opportunity for a wider range of recreational amenities and activities for the community and surrounding area;
- Provide the opportunity for a healthier community through an increase of physical exercise facilities and extensive trail system;
- Strengthen Willowbrook's community identity through an integrated park design that embraces a theme of water as restorative and recreational.
- Provide additional facilities where community gathering events can be held;
- Revitalize the northern lake to provide a safe water source for public fishing, paddle boating and kayak uses;
- Incorporate the proposed recommendation from the County's Feasibility Analysis Second District Equestrian Facility (Withers & Sandgren/Integrated Consulting Group, July 2014);
- Provide basketball courts to support the legacy sport of the person after whom Park is named;
- Incorporate aquatic uses into the Master Plan to support the community's high demand for this amenity;
- Provide adequate traffic access into and through the project area
- Provide adequate parking facilities within the project area;
- Relocate the South Agency Headquarters, within the project area, to better service the project and community needs;
- Provide on-site operation and maintenance support; and
- Provide on-site security support.

## **Programs**

The Master Plan is comprised of the following primary components summarized below:

1. The Community Event Center is proposed to be 20,000-square feet in size, it would include a lobby with interactive display and reception area, restrooms, kitchen, support area for staff and storage, and maintenance and electrical areas.
2. The Gymnasium is proposed in the southeast quadrant of the park. The 21,000-square foot gymnasium would be a public event area, and would consist of the following uses: lobby, exercise room, restrooms, two indoor basketball courts, locker rooms, support areas (including staff offices, storage, janitors closet, mechanical room, and pipe chase), as well as a circulation hall area.
3. The Equestrian Facilities Center would include an office, multi-use room, restrooms, and warming kitchen for events. Additionally, the equestrian center would include both covered and uncovered arenas and stables, covered wash racks, a rental corral, maintenance yard, and turnouts/round pens. The equestrian facilities center would support up to 85 boarders and a corral with tack rooms for 20 rental horses. The equestrian facilities center would have 100 standard parking spaces and 25 pull-through

trailer spaces, as well as truck and trailer pull out areas. The equestrian center would encompass approximately 10 acres. In addition, a total of 1.75 miles of equestrian trails are also proposed, and would be located along the perimeter of the project site.

4. The South Agency Headquarters (SAH) would encompass approximately 10 acres and would include offices, training rooms/break rooms, storage areas, crafts/shop areas, yard space with fueling station, loose material bays, hazardous materials storage, and big machinery parking, automotive service bays, and a warehouse. The presence of the SAH would complement the other planned uses by creating an on-site County presence for activities for the users and additional security for the more active planned uses.
5. An Aquatic Center is proposed on the privately-owned UHC site. Currently, the County does not own or control the UHC site. However, it is the County's intent that should the UHC site be acquired in the future, an aquatic center would be a desirable recreational use that could be developed on that site. If and/or when the UHC site could be acquired by the County is unknown. The aquatic center is envisioned as encompassing approximately 25,000 to 35,000 square feet. It would include four outdoor pools, including competition, instructional, leisure, and activity pools. It would also include outdoor spectator space/stands. Additionally, the aquatic center would include offices, classrooms/training rooms, locker/dressing rooms, restrooms, weight rooms, and storage areas.
6. The Multi-Purpose Soccer and Football Athletic Fields would include a multi-purpose sports fields with synthetic surfaces, and running/walking track. The multi-purpose fields would include spectator bleachers, lighting for nighttime events, restrooms, ticket booths, and concession stands. The athletic fields would be fenced and would encompass approximately six acres.
7. The Amphitheater is proposed to be a 1,500-seat outdoor amphitheater which would include security and performance lighting for both daytime and nighttime events.
8. The Skate Park is proposed to be 15,000 square feet and is adjacent to the two proposed Outdoor Basketball Courts, for a total of 9,000 to 10,000 square feet of playing surface.
9. Various Water Features comprise a system that is thematic for the overall project. The largest proposed water feature is the lake. The configuration of the existing north lake would be enhanced while the existing south lake would be repurposed into a series of functional living water feature. The southern portion of the lake, at the park entrance, would feature a linear reflecting pool and children's water play area including a 10,000-square foot interactive fountain area/splash pad. The central portion of the water features is proposed to be utilized for a 10,000-square foot model boating area and community gatherings. This area would also feature artistic bridges traversing the lake to provide both access and beauty. A 1,500-square foot fishing dock would also be developed to allow for fishing to once again occur at the lake. Moving north, water and landscape would work together to collect and clean the water through a series of filtration ponds and wetlands. The north lake is envisioned to be utilized in a more active

manner and would include a paddle boat/kayak boat area. This area would also include a concession stand, a restroom area, boat shack, and storage area. A promenade, picnic shelter, children's play area and parking are also proposed around the north lake which would enhance the water edge. The lake and water features total approximately nine acres.

10. A Wedding Pavilion is proposed on the west side of the project, adjacent to the reflecting pool. The wedding pavilion is envisioned to be approximately 1,250 square feet in size, and accommodate 100 to 200 people. The wedding pavilion would be partially covered and would include garden amenities such as arbors and/or trellises.
11. The Walking Trails and Exercise Amenities would include a main path that will go around the lake and an extensive path system which will bring the user through the different landscapes and experiences from the urban to the natural. Five exercise equipment station areas are proposed to be located adjacent to the walking trails to provide increased fitness opportunities and would encompass approximately 500 to 1,000 square feet each. The walking trails total approximately 4 miles and would be open to the public seven days a week from sunrise to sunset.
12. The Dog Park would be located north of the proposed SAH and would encompass up to one acre and would be required to have a 200-foot minimum setback from residential and play areas. The entire dog park facility would be fenced. The Los Angeles County Code Section 10.32.010 prohibits off-leash dogs on any streets or public places. However, should the County amend the Code in the future, off-leash dogs would be permitted within the dog park.
13. The Sculpture Garden and Civic Plaza would encompass approximately 20,000 square feet of park space and could include amenities such as a flower conservatory, rose garden, and a potential area for farmers markets and craft fairs. This area is also envisioned to be the grand main entrance for the proposed project from El Segundo Blvd.
14. A total of six Restroom Buildings are proposed throughout the Project, for a total of 3,600 square feet of restroom space. These restrooms would be free-standing restrooms and would be located adjacent to active use areas of the project. Additionally, the recreational amenities (equestrian facility, aquatic center, stadium, gymnasium, community center) proposed as part of the Master Plan would include restrooms as well.
15. Four large and ten small Group Picnic Areas are proposed throughout the project site. The large group picnic areas are envisioned to accommodate 50 to 100 people, while the small group picnic areas would accommodate 25 to 50 people. Additionally, stand-alone picnic tables would be located throughout the project site.
16. Four Children's Play Areas are proposed throughout the project site. Each play area would encompass approximately 2,500 square feet and would accommodate a range of ages. These play areas would include playground facilities, shade structures, and open play areas.

17. Circulation and Parking would include the main access off of El Segundo Boulevard, with a grand civic entry and formal reflecting pool, flanked by an enhanced streetscape plan for the El Segundo Boulevard frontage, entrance and signs off of 120th Street, a vehicular drive that would connect the El Segundo Boulevard to East 120th Street on the north end, and a total of eight parking lots throughout the Project site. The main parking lot would be located in the center of EMJ Park, along the main vehicular drive. This parking lot is proposed to be an eco-parking lot, with bioswales, permeable paving, and photovoltaic panels that would provide shade and energy to the project site. An estimated total of 2,000 parking spaces are proposed for the project.
18. Security and Safety would include new and enhanced lighting throughout the entire project site to increase visibility and safety.

### **Project Needs**

The existing Park was constructed in three phases between 1982 and 1985. The Park is an approximately 104-acre passive park, with expanses of open areas landscaped with grasses and trees. The Park contains walking trails, playgrounds, and open fields for activities such as soccer, as well as two artificial lakes that are connected by a concrete channel. A right of way easement (Parcel 6086031273), owned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is located on site. It presently serves as a utility corridor for overhead electrical transmission lines. There is a parking lot located along the southern area of the Park and adjacent to El Segundo Blvd, a second parking lot is located on the northeast corner adjacent to 120th Street and a third parking lot is located along the western area adjacent to Avalon Blvd.

Since 2013, the Department, with the support of a Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the Strategic Growth Council, has been working on Community Parks and Recreation Plans to identify and address the park needs of the following six unincorporated communities: East Los Angeles, East Rancho Dominguez, Lennox, Walnut Park, West Athens-Westmont, and Willowbrook. As part of the public outreach process for the Willowbrook Community Parks and Recreation Plan, residents expressed the need for a wide variety of recreational amenities, including the following: exercise facilities, including new walking and running paths; play space for children; spaces for older youth, including sports facilities; gathering places for community and family events; an arts facility; a performance space; a splash pad; and an equestrian center, including stables, riding rings, equestrian trails; and green infrastructure.

Implementation of the proposed project will address these needs by including expansion and comprehensive rehabilitation of the existing Park and the construction of new, state-of-the-art recreational facilities (Community Event Center, Equestrian Center, Gymnasium, South Agency Headquarters, Aquatic Center, Multi-Purpose Stadium, Wedding Pavilion, Skate Park, etc.) and amenities (picnic areas, amphitheater, outdoor basketball courts, water features, walking trails and exercise amenities, children's play areas, dog park, sculpture garden and civic plaza, splash pad, reflecting pool, fishing lake, restrooms, etc.). The existing LADWP electrical transmission line easement would remain in place. No development is proposed to occur within the easement.

## **Project Constraints**

Due to both fiscal and environmental constraints, it is anticipated that development of the proposed project components would occur in six phases. The phases include six smaller areas of the site that could be developed independently from a site design perspective (i.e. functional grading phases and construction logistics) as remediation phases are completed and funding for construction of amenities becomes available. The first phase is generally located in the center of the site, has a low level of remediation constraints and provides a wide range of recreational activities. The remaining five areas of the site could be developed in a variety of different sequences that is yet to be determined and thus they are not numbered in sequential order.

## **EXISTING ZONING**

The Project area consists of the existing Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park, which is zoned "Open Space" (O-S), "Neighborhood Business" (C-2) and "Single Family Residence" (R-1 and R-1-5000). The remainder of the Project area, which includes the former Ujima Village Apartment Complex site and the Ujima Housing Corporation site, are zoned "Limited multiple residence" (R-2-20U) and "Neighborhood Business" (C-2). The area north of the Project site consists of single-family housing off of 120th Street in the City of Los Angeles, the areas west of the Project site are zoned "R-1", "C-2" and "C-3". The areas south of the Project site are zoned "R-1", "R-3" and "C-2", and the areas east of the Project site are zoned "R-1" and "C-1".

## **GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY**

The majority of the project site is located within unincorporated areas of the County. A small portion of the project site is located within the City of Los Angeles, but this area is owned and operated by the Department as part of a single, contiguous park. A right of way easement (Parcel 6086031273), owned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is also located on the project site. It presently serves as a utility corridor for overhead electrical transmission lines, no development is proposed to occur within the easement, and it would continue to operate in its current state.

The project site consists of the existing Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park, which is designated as "Parks and Recreation" (OS-PR) and "Water" (W) in the County General Plan Land Use Element. The remainder of the project site, which includes the former Ujima Village Apartment Complex site and the Ujima Housing Corporation site, are designated as "Parks and Recreation" (OS-PR) and "Public and Semi-Public" (P). The proposed Master Plan is consistent with the County General Plan.

The project is consistent with the following goals and policies in the Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan:

- Policy P/R 1.1: Provide opportunities for public participation in designing and planning parks and recreation programs.
- Policy P/R 1.2: Provide additional active and passive recreation opportunities based on a community's setting, and recreational needs and preferences.

- Policy P/R 1.3: Consider emerging trends in parks and recreation when planning for new parks and recreation programs.
- Policy P/R 1.4: Promote efficiency by building on existing recreation programs.
- Policy P/R 1.5: Ensure that County parks and recreational facilities are clean, safe, inviting, usable and accessible.
- Policy P/R 1.6: Improve existing parks with needed amenities and address deficiencies identified through the park facility inventories.
- Policy P/R 1.8: Enhance existing parks to offer balanced passive and active recreation opportunities through more efficient use of space and the addition of new amenities.
- Policy P/R 1.10: Ensure a balance of passive and recreational activities in the development of new park facilities.
- Policy P/R 2.2: Establish new revenue generating mechanisms to leverage County resources to enhance existing recreational facilities and programs.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

The Department, on behalf of the County, as the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Draft EIR, Final EIR, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, Findings of Fact, and Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Issues addressed in the EIR include Aesthetics, Light, and Glare; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology, Soils and Seismicity; Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use; Noise; Public Services and Utilities; Recreation and Transportation and Circulation. Impacts to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soil, Hazards and Hazardous Materials and Transportation and Circulation would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures. There are two potentially significant and unavoidable impacts that could not be reduced to less than significance with implementation of mitigation measures: Noise and Recreation.

### **NOTIFICATION**

A notice of public hearing and availability of the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Master Plan was mailed on November 6, 2015. The notice was prepared and distributed pursuant to Section 22.60.174 of the County Zoning Ordinance. Notices were mailed to more than 2,900 stakeholder individuals and organizations. Furthermore, the plan was made available on the Department web site, at the Department offices and South Agency Headquarters, the Willowbrook Library, Athens County Park and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Public Health. The notice was also published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram on November 6, 2015.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

The Department has undertaken extensive outreach efforts to the public since the project inception. The purpose of the outreach efforts is to inform project stakeholders and



continuously engage the general public, park users, and local residents in a dialogue about the adequacy of the existing Park.

Three community workshops were held in 2014 to present the Master Plan and receive feedback from the public on the Master Plan's findings and recommendations. Approximately 50 people attended the June 14 workshop, 120 people attended the August 23 workshop, and 93 people attended the November 1 workshop. In addition, Department staff, in conjunction with consultants, carried out other outreach efforts, including but not limited to: sending out electronic e-mail blasts to interested parties; attending the Willowbrook Community Parks and Recreation Plan Design Workshop at Mona Park to announce the dates of the community workshops; attending community leaders meeting held by the County at the 2nd District Supervisor's office to inform the community of progress on the Master Plan process; meeting with the Regional Water Quality Control Board and Department of Toxic Substances Control to discuss preliminary Master Plan efforts; discussing the project with Park users and distribution of information at the park on multiple days; and mailing flyers to residents within a 1,000-foot radius of the project site.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

In accordance with CEQA, a Notice of Preparation was distributed on October 13, 2014, to the Office of Planning and Research and responsible State agencies, in addition to public agencies and organizations and individuals with a possible interest in the Master Plan. The purpose of the Notice of Preparation was to provide notification that the County planned to prepare an EIR and to solicit input on the scope and content of the EIR. A total of 72 written comment letters were received from various agencies, organizations, and individuals.

A Notice of Availability (Notice) of the Draft EIR was issued on September 2, 2015 and was mailed to approximately 2,500 addresses. The Notice was posted at the Registrar Recorder/County Clerk, pursuant to Section 21092.3 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Copies of the Draft EIR for public review were located at the Department of Parks and Recreation, 510 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020; South Agency Headquarters, 360 West El Segundo Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90061 and the following three locations: County of Los Angeles Public Library - Willowbrook Branch, 11838 Wilmington Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90059; Athens County Park, 12603 Broadway Los Angeles, CA 90059; Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Public Health, 11833 South Wilmington Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90059. The Notice also contained the availability of the document online with the link to the Department website. The Department conducted a Draft EIR Public Meeting on September 12, 2015, at the Athens Park Gymnasium to seek input from the public regarding environmental issues that may result from the proposed Project. Approximately 57 people attended the meeting and 20 written comments were submitted.

A total of 751 comment letters were received, including seven from the following public agencies: City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, County Fire Department, County Public Works Department, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Transportation, Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and the State Clearinghouse. The following two organizations submitted comments: Los Angeles Equine Advisory Committee and Los Angeles Equestrian Center. A total of 743 residents submitted comments as well. All comments received and responses to those comments are included in the Final EIR.

Responses to the comments were sent to public agencies mentioned above, pursuant to CEQA requirements. Comments included support for the design of the improvements and generally focused on concerns that the proposed equestrian center could have a negative impact on the community.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department recommends that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the proposed Master Plan and forward the Master Plan and the related environmental documents to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.

#### **Recommended Motion**

*I move that the Regional Planning Commission close the public hearing and find that the Final Environmental Impact Report reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the County, and approve the resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors hold a public hearing to consider and adopt the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Master Plan, the Final Environmental Impact Report, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, Finding of Facts and Statement of Overriding Considerations.*

*I also move that the Regional Planning Commission approve the resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors hold a public hearing to consider and adopt the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Master Plan as presented today, and determine that it is compatible with and supports the goals and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan.*

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#### **Attachments:**

1. Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park Master Plan
2. Draft Environmental Impact Report
3. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
4. Finding of Facts and Statement of Overriding Considerations
5. Final Environmental Impact Report

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Reviewed by: Clement Lau, AICP, Departmental Facilities Planner II, Planning and CEQA Section, Parks and Recreation